
Abstract

M. L. King and R. B. Gregg: An Intellectual Genealogy of Nonviolence

Jun Kikuchi

It is well-known that Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. developed his thought on nonviolence through the influence of Mahatma Gandhi. Therefore, it is critical to understand Gandhi's concept of nonviolence when trying to understand King's. However, this is insufficient in coming to an understanding of the totality of King's thought on the subject since there is an intellectual genealogy underpinning it.

This article makes it clear that another important figure in the development of King's thought was Richard Bartlett Gregg (1885-1974), who heavily influenced him through his book, *The Power of Nonviolence* (1935). R. B. Gregg was an American lawyer and Quaker pacifist who learned the theory of nonviolence during his time in India (1925-29), in the course of which he lived with Gandhi for seven months.

King first learned of Gregg when he was introduced to *The Power of Nonviolence* in 1956, while he was engaged in the Montgomery bus boycott. Their interaction initially began through letter correspondence, and their friendship was deepened. They actually met in February 1959, just as King was readying to go to India. Upon his return, King invited Gregg to be a guest speaker at a conference in Atlanta in order to propagate the concept of nonviolence in the South. Gregg ultimately supported King's movement on nonviolence, at times providing advice and strong encouragement. We can surmise that Gregg's influence upon King was profound and can see one aspect of the intellectual genealogy of nonviolence in their interactions.